

MICHAEL E. WEST

FOIA ex 6, Personal Privacy

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Linda Ketellapper, SFD-7-5
U.S Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX
Superfund Division
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: 104 (e) Request for Information – Omega Superfund Site Real Property at 12430
E. Whittier Blvd., Whittier, CA

I am attempting to answer your questions to the best of my ability as a former officer and President of Merle West, Inc. I worked in my father's business from about the age of 7 and officially became an employee at about age 14. When I returned from the service in the Army in August of 1969 I went to work full time and continued until the corporation went out of business in 1991.

As you can see from my letterhead, I now reside in Monterey, CA and have no access to the corporate records which were disposed of over the last 17 years as the space was rented to other entities. The information I am giving is from memory and may not be completely accurate on dates, but is as close as I can remember. Most of those involved in the business including my father are now deceased. My mother, [REDACTED] is 93 years old and has severe loss of memory and her affairs are handled by my sister [REDACTED] who resides in Whittier.

To my knowledge there were never any spills of hazardous materials at the property and its principal use was as a rug laundry using water and detergent which was emptied into the sanitary sewer and later on as a retail flooring store. The entire working area of the cleaning plant was designed for rug washing and was all slanted to drain to the sanitary sewer. We did have a perchloroethylene dry cleaning machine for several years during the 1980's, but again there were no spills and it was a new sealed dry to dry system except for the 5 minute deodorization cycle which vented to the air.

Answers to Questions 1-14

1. Michael Eldo West, [REDACTED] FOIA ex 6, Personal Privacy
[REDACTED] I held various officer positions beginning in 1969 in Merle West, Inc. ending as President when the corporation dissolved in 1991. Merle West, Inc. operated under dba's as Merle West Rug, Upholstery & Drapery Cleaners, the "Cleaning Division" and as Merle West Carpet and Floors the "Retail Sales Division".
2. The original property, 1950?, was owned by a partnership of Merle West and his brother Myron West. When Merle bought out his brother, he formed Merle West, Inc. Merle West, Inc. owned the property at 12430 E. Whittier Blvd. from then until the early 1970's when the property was purchased from the corporation by the Merle E. and

Elizabeth L. West QTIT Trust. Merle West, Inc. then became a tenant. Merle West Carpet, Upholstery & Drapery Cleaning (the Cleaning Division) was sold to Vacco, Inc. in 1987 and all cleaning operations by Merle West, Inc. ceased at the property. Vacco, Inc. and its successor Coit continued to use the name and keep only a Cash & Carry location on the property to this day. Merle West Carpet and Floors (the Retail Sales Division) was sold to [FOIA ex 6, Personal Privacy] in 1991 and Merle West, Inc. went out of business. That retail business continues to this day in a portion of the property. The Academy of Textiles and Flooring, Shaw's Carpet Cleaning and Shaw's Carpet One were tenants at the site with the primary company being the Academy of Textiles and Flooring. [FOIA ex 6, Personal Privacy] are the principals of those companies.

3. Merle West, Inc. was incorporated prior to my involvement in its operation. My father and his brother Myron worked as partners and the corporation was established when they dissolved the partnership at a later date in the late 1950's or early 1960's. This should be available from the State of California.

4. As I stated, I was not privy to all of the ownership information on the property. It is currently owned by the remainder of the family trust.

5. Merle West, Inc. no longer exists, but did operate at the property from its inception until ceasing existence in 1991. I don't think there was ever a formal lease from the Merle West trust to Merle West, Inc.

6. The Academy of Textiles and Flooring still leases a portion of the property from the Trust, as does Merle West Carpet & Floors and Coit.

7. The only other businesses that I am aware of which briefly rented the property were an independent print shop around 1990 followed by Acro Printing from 1991-1992 and Eleanor Swift & Associates 1991-1992. The print shop and its successor, Acro Printing, leased the rear portion for their print shop; Eleanor Swift manufactured pet clothing with sewing machines in a middle section shown on the diagram Exhibit A.

8. a. In my personal files I found an old diagram from 1991, Exhibit A, which shows the location of businesses at that time. There were no tanks or liquid storage at in 1991. However, for a period of time in the 1980's, about 5 years I think, Merle West, Inc. operated a perchloroethylene dry cleaning machine in the area marked "Vacco". See #9 for more information.

b. Because Merle West Rug Cleaners was essentially a rug laundry, there were two sump traps to keep sand and lint out of the sewer system where the rinse water flowed. The first was in the original plant area on the West side of the room rented by Swift. The second was beside the ramp into the sliding door where Acro Printing was located. Both of these went directly into the sanitary sewer. The second was installed when the rug cleaning operation was moved into the rear building in the early-mid sixties.

c. There were no wells or below ground storage.

d. There was no special exterior drainage systems other than a plastic pipe along the West side of the property to channel roof run-off past the adjacent building's drive way.

e. There were two additions to the original structure. The first was in the latter 1950's, a 24'x30' room which enclosed the old sizing platform. This was then used for upholstery cleaning and became storage in 1991. Subsequently in the early-mid sixties, a 34'x57' rear structure, where the rug washing and dusting equipment was moved, along with a two story structure along the west side of the original wash floor and dry room.

f. There was no waste storage or accumulation at the site other than the drained Kleenrite filters which were kept in plastic bags for removal by the company which supplied them and replenished the perc. I'm sorry but I can't remember their name, but they were a major dry cleaning supplier in the Los Angeles area, Van Waters & Rodgers perhaps?

9. a. There was a brand new 50 pound "dry to dry" Italian perchloroethylene dry cleaning machine purchased from Kelleher Equipment Co. in the 1980's. It had a holding tank of perhaps 100 gallons? It was a sealed system and did not have a still but used only the Kleenrite filters to refresh the perc. We did not have a high volume of business and the machine was primarily used for drapery cleaning. The machine and its accessories were sold and moved to Merced, CA when the cleaning business was sold in 1987. As with any laundry there were small amounts of spotting agents used during the cleaning operations. These were either rinsed into the sanitary sewer or evaporated in the case of volatile solvents.

b. The dry cleaning machine was installed in the west side of the area marked Vacco and is noted on Exhibit A.

c. I do not have such forms and don't remember them being in existence at the time. We were licensed by the California State board of Fabric Care and permitted by the Los Angeles Air Quality Management District.

d. I don't remember there being "manifests" and those records are gone. I think we left the cleaning business just as the environmental awareness changed and newer reporting and record keeping standards began.

10. Besides myself and Merle West, my father, the only other person who worked on the dry cleaning machine was FOIA ex 6, Personal Privacy who, like my father is deceased. There were several employees who processed the draperies but I no longer have their records. They were not involved in the actual maintenance of the equipment.

11. I don't have any of these documents.

12. There are none since there were no spills.

13. There were no remediation or clean-up activities.

14. I have no knowledge regarding the condition of the property at the time of purchase.

My apologies for the inconsistent indents while typing this answer sheet. I just can't get the new Vista program to cooperate! If you have any other questions please contact me directly at the above address and phone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael E. West", with a large, stylized initial "M" and "W".

Michael E. West
Former President, Merle West, Inc.

Exhibit A
See question
- 8 e.

12430 E. Whittier Blvd., Whittier, CA

1/4" = 5'

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WHITTIER BLVD

Location
of
Dry Cleaning
Machine
1987

Original
Lint & Sand
Sump
Trap

